

VZCZCXYZ0005
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGT #0856 1232247
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 032247Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9572
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000856

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [SNAR](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: GUATEMALA'S RISING CRIME, COSTS DEEPEN POLITICAL
DISAFFECTION

11. Summary. Guatemalans are most concerned about violent crime and the rising cost of living, the majority believes that Guatemala is on the wrong path, and many Guatemalans say they are worse off than one year ago. Those were the findings of a nation-wide CID-Gallup survey conducted from April 3-12, 2006, findings consistent with similar CID-Gallup surveys carried out during the last two years. Also, while citizens held the current government in low regard, they were pessimistic about whether the next election would help solve the country's problems. These latest results also confirmed that the vast majority does not identify with any of Guatemala's political parties. End summary.

12. Guatemalans were deeply dissatisfied with present conditions and also pessimistic about the future. Crime and violence was identified (52%) as the most serious problem facing the country overall (note: 42% of those living in Guatemala City said that a member of their household had been a victim of robbery or assault during the last four months). Seventy-six percent of Guatemalans said they saw no improvement in their economic condition during the last year and an equal number expected their economic condition would remain the same or worsen during the next 12 months. Respondents overwhelmingly identified "rising costs of basic goods" (61%) as the economic problem that would most affect the country during the coming year. Most said they believed that Guatemala is on the wrong path (64%), and most believed that the Berger administration would leave Guatemala either the same or in worse condition than it had found it (71%), but very few (20%) expected the 2007 presidential elections would help solve Guatemala's problems.

13. Most of those surveyed had taken little interest in the upcoming 2007 presidential elections and it appears the field is wide open. Nearly half of those surveyed could offer no answer to the question, "Who do you consider will be the next president of the country?" The most popular response was Alvaro Colom of UNE, who lost to Berger in run-off elections in 2003. When offered a sample ballot, the largest number expressed support for Colom (35%), followed by Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu (8%), former Vice-President Luis Flores Asturias (7%); and former head of government and FRG Secretary General Efraim Rios Montt (7%). In December 2005,

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only 25% of respondents expressed support for Colom, which appears to indicate growing support for his presumed candidacy.

14. Respondents were even less likely to identify with a party than a candidate. Sixty-six percent indicated they did not prefer any political party over another; 11% named UNE, Colom's party, followed by GANA (6%), PAN (5%), and FRG (5%). In addition, when asked, "How much do you feel you are represented by the country's current political parties?" only 13% responded either "somewhat" or "very much." Notably, the

number of citizens claiming affiliation with the governing GANA party has fallen 30% since April 2004.

¶5. CID-Gallup surveyed 1200 adults across Guatemala from April 3 to 12. Respondents were evenly split between men and women and 16% lived in the Guatemala City metro area. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 2.8 points.

¶6. Comment. The results of the April survey are consistent with trends in public opinion over the past two years and reflect disappointment over the Berger administration's failure to make inroads against poverty and unrelenting violent crime. These results also underscore the ongoing failure of Guatemala's political parties to institutionalize and expand their bases of support. Instead, Guatemalans continue to identify much more strongly with individual candidates than parties. Among potential candidates, Colom appears to be well ahead of the field and, when compared to previous surveys, it seems that his support is growing; however, at this point, his strong numbers are more likely due to name recognition after two failed presidential candidacies than evidence of a committed following. End comment.
Derham